



King County

Citizens' Advisory Commission on Homeless Encampments

Meeting Summary June 21, 2004

Commissioners Present: Rhonda Berry, Capt. Carl Cole, Shane Davies, Dini Duclos, Paul Fischburg, Bill Hobson, Bill Kirlin-Hackett, Sandra Kortum, Alan Painter, Chaplain Al Patterson, Holly Plackett, Steven Pyeatt, Susan Rynas; Bob Santos, Judy Schnebele, Doug Stevenson, Ron Swicord, Robert Thompson MD, Rev. Harriett Walden, Linda Weedman, Janna Wilson

Commissioner Absent: Tony Lee

Guests: Councilmember Carolyn Edmonds, Ashton Butler, Simon Farreta, John Briggs, Donald Chamberlain, Sally Bagshaw

Staff Present: David Wertheimer, Jackie MacLean, Sherry Hamilton, Patrick Vanzo, Carole Antoncich

King County Councilmember Carolyn Edmonds welcomed Commissioners and guests to the first meeting of the King County Citizens' Advisory Commission on Homeless Encampments. She opened her remarks by thanking the individuals who had agreed to serve on the Commission. She stated her expectation that this group would develop recommendations and provide direction to King County government on such questions as the appropriateness of public encampments as a place for people to live; how encampments fit into the overall fabric of shelter and housing; appropriate public processes; and partnerships that might be needed.

David Wertheimer introduced himself as the facilitator for the Commission and presented the opening exercise, asking Commissioners to introduce themselves to their fellow commissioners, and to answer two questions: 1) What is the single most important or valuable action step your community or King County has taken to address the issue of homelessness; and 2) What is the single most significant or challenging problem related to homelessness that is currently facing your community or King County? Responses are attached to this meeting summary.

Following the opening exercise, Commissioners agreed that personal e-mail addresses would not be shared outside of the group. Proposed operating principles and procedures were reviewed, discussed, and approved, and the group agreed to use the consensus model for reaching decisions.

Jackie MacLean, Director, King County Department of Community and Human Services reviewed the council ordinance establishing the Commission, and the three tasks before the group (as per the ordinance). The Commission's task is to study and make advisory recommendations (with supporting reasoning and justification) to the executive and council committee of the whole on the following issues by August 15, 2004:

1. A needs assessment for homeless encampments including an analysis of homeless shelters in King County and the date and time when demand for shelter have exceeded available space;
2. Policy and procedural guidelines for determining the location of future homeless encampments; and
3. Options including an analysis of the potential advantages and disadvantages for locating homeless encampments on public land or private land in King County.

Commissioners were asked to read the Board of Ethics materials sent with their confirmation letters. Commissioners were reminded that, for the duration of their service on the commission, they are considered county employees and bound by the rules of conduct noted in those materials. All Commissioners must complete and sign the financial disclosure form and if they have not already done so, were asked to bring their completed forms to the next Commission meeting.

The Commission decided to postpone the election of co-chairs until members have had the chance to learn more about each other. When selected, they will serve as the official spokespersons for the Commission. It was agreed that Jackie MacLean, Director of the King County Department of Community and Human Services, will serve as spokesperson for the Commission in the interim. It was also agreed that David Wertheimer will continue to facilitate the meetings and set agendas until such time as co-chairs are selected.

There was discussion regarding scheduling and location of public hearings and the location of future Commission meetings. Staff will work on these issues, poll Commissioners by e-mail as needed, and bring recommendations back to Commissioners.

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 29 from 3:00-5:00 p.m. at the Wells Fargo Building located at 999 Third Avenue, 44th Floor, Seattle, Washington.

Commissioners' responses: What is the single most important or valuable action step your community or King County has taken to address the issue of homelessness?

- Setting up the Citizens' Advisory Commission on Homeless Encampments (3X)
- Developing the continuum of care from "back door" of the King County jail
- Passage of the Seattle Housing Levy (5X)
- Commission established and previous mistakes recognized
- Budgeting of county general fund dollars to address homelessness
- Housing levy – creation of housing
- Citizens and communities taking action to create housing
- Opening Federal Building as shelter space; being creative about locating shelters
- Development of mindset in support of homeless people
- City of Tukwila funding homeless prevention programs

- Strong housing developers and providers and Committee to End Homelessness activities
- Strength of families, organizations, churches in tackling this community need without government intervention; interdenominational housing development in rural area
- Community support and partnerships in suburban areas
- South King County's cities addressing housing as a critical issue for cities and suburbs
- Safe Harbors
- Citizen, church and organizations' efforts
- Thoughtful approach to need and development of services
- Seattle has a strong core of homeless services
- Development of affordable housing in Redmond/Avondale, mixed rate housing

Commissioners' responses: What is the single most significant or challenging problem related to homelessness that is currently facing your community or King County?

- Growing number of homeless
- 99 corridor – drug issues, tent city has been too close
- Migration of homeless from community to community
- Lack of creation of system of response to homelessness
- Growth in numbers of those without housing
- Separating vital few issues from trivial many, with focus on truly needy homeless
- Housing not affordable for those with less
- Stereotypes of the homeless as bad people
- Isolation of people and families that creates/sustains homelessness; lack of safety net
- Barriers to shelter and services
- Risk of rules that will displace folks from tent cities
- Resource-starved homeless response; lack of permanent supportive housing
- Mobility of homeless
- Chasms between partners; lack of political will, especially in suburbs
- Need increased supply of affordable housing
- Lack of employment
- Concentration of homeless that follow tent cities
- Lack of funds for mental health and domestic violence services; no treatment on demand
- Funding and resources for South King County, poorest parts of county
- Lack of resources, especially for mental illness; funds and human resources alike
- Complex reasons for growth of homelessness: poverty, racism, lack of access to health care, etc.
- Growth of homelessness and increased housing prices and costs of living
- Migration of homeless without services to suburbs
- Changing perceptions of homelessness; stigma
- People need places to live; requires creative solutions in all communities